

Claims

1. A method for in vitro production of bone tissue, comprising the steps of:
- (a) applying undifferentiated mammalian cells on a substrate;
 - (b) directly contacting said cells with a culture medium for a sufficient time to produce a continuous mineralised or non-mineralised matrix having a thickness of at least 0.5 μm ;
 - (c) removing the substrate with the matrix from the culture medium.
2. A method according to claim 1, wherein said undifferentiated mammalian cells are bone marrow cells, especially stromal cells.
3. A method according to claim 1, wherein in said cells are autologous cells.
4. A method according to claim 1, wherein in step (a) the cells are applied at a rate of 10^3 to 10^6 cells per cm^2 .
5. A method according to claim 1, wherein the culture medium used in step (b) is a conditioned liquid culture medium.
6. A method according to claim 5, wherein the culture medium used in step (b) is conditioned by prior exposure to viable marrow cells.
7. A method according to claim 1, wherein in step (b) the cells are contacted with the culture medium until a matrix layer of 1-100 μm , in particular of 10-50 μm has been produced.
8. A method according to claim 1, wherein in step (b) the cells are contacted with the culture medium for at least 2 weeks.
9. A method according to claim 1, for the provision of load-bearing implants, joint prostheses, maxillofacial implants or special surgery devices.

10. A method of producing active factors such as growth factors, comprising the steps of:

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- (a) applying undifferentiated mammalian cells on a substrate;
 - (b) directly contacting said cells with a culture medium for a sufficient time to produce growth factors;
 - (c) removing the substrate with the matrix from the culture medium;
 - (d) recovering the active factors from the culture medium.

11. A method according to claim 10, wherein in step (b) the cells are contacted with the culture medium for at least 2 weeks.

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- 10 12. A method of restoring a load-bearing structure in a mammal, including man, comprising introducing a substrate coated with a continuous matrix produced according to claim 1 as an implant into the site of the structure to be restored.

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